

Local RESTORE Council
August 8, 2013
Milton, Florida

Present: Chairman Lane Lynchard, Commissioner Robert “Bob” Cole and members: Kelley Fuller, Shon Owens, Brian Watkins, Edwin “Buzz” Eddy, Dave Robau, Rob Williamson, Donna Tucker, and Greg Fountain. Cal Bodenstein was absent. Also present were the County Administrator (Hunter Walker) and County Engineer (Roger Blaylock). Lynchard called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. in the Administrative Complex Board Meeting Room.

Lynchard moved approval without objection of the July 8, 2013 meeting minutes.

Jeff Helms, Atkins North America, Inc., gave a power point presentation to the Board (Attachment in file). He said he recently attended a Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) Public Scoping Meeting for the Phase III project. Helms said one of the note worthy comments at this meeting was that the process needs to speed up. He said it has been three years since the BP oil spill and there have only been a handful of projects started. Helms said members of the Navarre Beach Leaseholders and Residents Association spoke at this meeting and were very passionate about presenting the Navarre Beach Re-nourishment Project. He said there are still no guidelines from the Department of Treasury. Lynchard said there is a Consortium meeting on August 22, 2013 and hopefully by then there will be word of when guidelines will be received. Helms said Phase II of the trial has been postponed and will not begin until September 30th. He said BP is posturing because they are almost out of the \$20 billion that was initially set aside for claims. Helms said his staff has been working with County staff to develop watershed projects for the Pot 2 and Pot 3 funds. He said he would like the Council members to identify projects and submit them to Sheila Harris (Grants Coordinator). Helms said he is also requesting projects from the utility companies. He said he recently attended a Pensacola Bay Watershed meeting hosted by Nature Conservancy. Helms said there was discussion on the types of projects and how to rank and classify the projects in conjunction with Pot 2, NRDA and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) funds. He said in the next 30-60 days he would like to create approximately 20 projects for Santa Rosa County. Lynchard said the Nature Conservancy is coordinating an attempt to pull together a watershed plan in different areas along the coast and have them approved as part of the Consortium Plan and Gulf Ecosystem Restoration. He said there are 4 or 5 watersheds that feed the Gulf and this group is working with each watershed individually. Lynchard said watersheds cross over county and state lines. He said 55% of the watershed is located in the State of Alabama. Helms said this is a consistent approach to measuring projects throughout the 23 counties of the Gulf Coast. He said Santa Rosa County will also be competing for dollars against the other watersheds. Helms said he is going to set a meeting with Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to discuss the process and how Santa Rosa County can partner with the State, Water Management District, Fish and Wildlife Commission to stretch the funds. He said he feels quarterly meetings with FDEP will be an improvement on communication.

Williamson asked Helms if he could develop a schedule of future meetings regarding RESTORE. Helms said he will coordinate to have these added to the website.

Helms introduced Dr. Rod Lewis, (Haas Center, Director) as part of the RESTORE consulting team. He said he feels it is important to have the Haas Center engaged in this process. Helms said the Haas Center is also on Okaloosa County’s RESTORE consulting team.

There was further discussion on the Local RESTORE Council process (Attachment in file).

Watkins asked Helms how he wants the project information submitted. Helms said staff will forward the worksheet to fill out and this can be a start in identifying projects.

There was further discussion of the Santa Rosa County RESTORE Draft Goals. Lynchard said his vision for Pot 1 funds, for Santa Rosa County, would be that the County will not spend but invest every dollar. He said he would like this Council to begin investing in projects that will have a long-term, lasting, sustainable impact on Santa Rosa County. Lynchard said most projects that have a benefit to the environment will also have an economic return.

Robau asked about looking into public/private partnerships, from an economic development perspective. Lynchard said this may be a possibility. He said this will depend on the regulations of how the funds can be administered. Lynchard said he feels a good way to allocate some of the funds, set aside for economic development, will be a closing fund for Santa Rosa County. He said depending on the regulations he feels this could be a worthy project. Tucker said she feels this is a great idea.

Williamson said he feels tourism should be included in the goals. He said the goals, and the way the Council states them, will communicate to people submitting projects what this Council feels is important. Williamson said the impact to tourism was substantial. He said tourism is a big revenue driver for Santa Rosa County. Lynchard said the goals mention sustainable business community. He said he feels one could expand on this any number of ways to include tourism. Tucker said tourism is a part of Santa Rosa County's economy. Lynchard said the impact on tourism could be a criterion, once the Council begins developing the evaluation criteria for the categories.

Cole said he feels there should be stronger verbiage listed in the goals. He asked Helms if Florida's Great Northwest may have information, that time and research has already gone into, that this Council can use. Helms said he will ask the director and see what they have.

Lynchard said an overall mission statement is important. He read aloud the following proposed mission statement: "Invest in projects that will have a lasting, meaningful, and sustainable impact on Santa Rosa County's environment, infrastructure and economy."

There was further discussion about project goals and categories.

Fountain asked Lewis about his thoughts on the areas that are most critical to Santa Rosa County's economy. He also asked Lewis of possible threats to these areas. Lewis said the economic pony of Santa Rosa County, basically knows two tricks, (1) military and (2) tourism. He said agriculture is also a big component. Lewis said it is important to diversify within tourism. He said tourism was the County's most affected sector. Lewis said resilience and diversification is what is critical to the region, in regards to environment and economy.

Cole moved approval to adopt the mission statement as follows: "Invest in projects that will have a lasting, meaningful, and sustainable impact on Santa Rosa County's environment, infrastructure and economy." Eddy seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Lynchard said at the next meeting the Council will take a look at the RESTORE process and discuss developing the evaluation criteria for each category.

Fuller asked Helms if he would keep the Council informed as to any Santa Rosa County projects that have been submitted to NRDA but not approved, in order for the Council to look at these more closely. Helms said yes. He said he does not believe that some of the top priority projects submitted to NRDA have even been selected yet for NRDA funding.

Next Meeting

September 9, 2013 at 3:00 p.m.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Council at this time, the meeting adjourned.

By: Lane Lynchard, Chairman

